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MARYLAND HIGH SCHOOL ASSESSMENTS

Fact Sheet

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What are the Maryland High School Assessments (HSA)?

The HSA are tests in four core subjects: English 10, government, algebra/data analysis, and biology. More tests may be added in the future. Students take each test whenever they complete the course. For example, some students may take algebra in seventh grade while others may not take it until tenth grade.

The HSA contain multiple-choice questions and questions requiring written responses. These questions are based on the content outlined in Maryland's Core Learning Goals. More information on the Core Learning Goals and sample test questions are available on the Web at mdk12.org/mspp/high_school/.

Must students pass the HSA in order to graduate from high school?

Beginning with the graduating class of 2009 (students entering grade 9 in fall 2005), students are required to earn a satisfactory score on the HSA in order to earn a Maryland High School Diploma. Students have several options in fulfilling this requirement:

- Pass all four HSA. The passing scores are: algebra/data analysis (412), government (394), biology (400). The passing score for the English 10 HSA will be set in late October 2005.
OR
- Earn passing scores on state-approved substitute tests and substitute one or more of those scores for passing scores on the HSA. The state has yet to name acceptable substitute tests, but possibilities include the Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate tests.
OR
- Earn a minimum score on each HSA **and** earn the minimum combined score. The minimum score for each HSA will be lower than the passing score. The minimum combined score will be equal to the total of all the HSA passing scores. The Maryland State Department of Education has yet to establish the minimum scores. This combined-score option benefits students because it allows higher performance on one test to offset lower performance on another test.

To earn a Maryland High School Diploma, students must still meet all credit, service-learning, and attendance requirements as well as any local school system requirements. A summary of state graduation requirements is available on the Maryland State Department of Education Web site at www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/testing/hsa/.

Students are no longer required to take or pass the Maryland Functional Tests.

How and when are scores reported?

Beginning in 2005, the state will return students' test scores to the local school system within nine weeks of the test administration. Local school systems will then send the test scores to parents. Scores for schools, school systems, and the state are published annually in mid-August on the Web at www.mdreportcard.org.

Students' scores are reported as scale scores. By comparing their scores with the passing scale score, students know whether or not they passed the test. Maryland uses a scale score to provide a more precise measurement of a student's achievement and to assure that tests given at different times are comparable. Students' scores can range from 240 to 650 on the scale. The state requires local school systems to place students' HSA performance on their official records.

What happens if a student does not pass a test?

Students who do not pass an assessment will receive academic assistance from the local school system. After completing an academic assistance program, students can retake the assessment during the next administration.

To help with intervention and remediation, the state has created a series of online courses in HSA subject areas. Teachers may use the courses with students as an intervention strategy, and students may take the courses themselves to review tested material. The state also plans to develop practice tests that school systems can use to measure students' readiness for the HSA before they take it.

How were the HSA developed?

Teachers and other educators, parents, business leaders, community members, and educational and professional organizations from across Maryland collaborated on the development of the HSA. Each test item undergoes a comprehensive review process before it is included in an assessment. Learn more about test development and scoring on the Web at mdk12.org/mspp/high_school/.

The State Board of Education set HSA passing scores for algebra, biology, and government in August 2003. MSDE recommended these scores to the Board after conducting a week-long standard-setting process that involved more than 100 teachers, administrators, instructional supervisors, parents, and testing experts. The state will repeat this standard-setting process for the English 10 HSA in late October 2005.

How do the HSA relate to the MSA?

The Maryland School Assessment (MSA) is the state's measure of students' reading and math achievement in grades 3–8. (In 2008, science will also be tested in elementary, middle, and high school.) The MSA fulfills the testing requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. The content and format of the MSA will help prepare students for success on the High School Assessments. Both tests contain a mixture of multiple-choice questions and questions requiring written responses. Together, the two testing programs provide schools, teachers, and parents a good picture of student performance, and help identify students' strengths and weaknesses.